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Apropos Avantgarde: Neue Einblicke nach einhundert Jahren

ed. by Dolors Sabaté Planes and Jaime Feijóo (review)

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Journal of Austrian Studies, Volume 46, Number 1, Spring 2013, pp.
121-123 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/oas.2013.0004>

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first part, Dieter Breyer studies “Lorenz von Schnüffis und die österreichische Literaturgeschichte” (465–75). The second part contains an essay on Sigmund von Birken as a translator by Hartmut Laufhütte (490–511) and a text-based study of Protestantism in Burgenland by Dietz-Rüdiger Moser (512–25). Under “Performative Kulturen” are an essay by Karl-Heinz Huber on one of the plays from the Austrian Benedictine theater tradition (526–54) and a treatment by Orsolya Hancz of one-act comedies in the *Biedermeier* age, including short forms of Hungarian comedy (555–81). Two further pieces, included under “Rezeptionslandschaften,” complete this formidable volume; one, by Claudia Schweizer, draws on Joseph Stanislaus Zauper’s *Studien über Goethe* to exemplify the reception of the latter during the *Vormärz* period (582–602); the other, by Hartmut Steinecke, treats “Heine in Österreich” (603–18).

If only for its bibliography, this volume would be essential for any student of Austrian literature and culture. Beyond that necessary tool, however, the essays are as competent as they are varied in topic. Historical research is the emphasis here, and the contributions are models of *Literaturwissenschaft*, a term too often inflated and self-congratulatory.

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Dolors Sabaté Planes and Jaime Feijóo, eds., *Apropos Avantgarde: Neue Einblicke nach einhundert Jahren*. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2012. 35 pp.

The book *Apropos Avantgarde* contains seventeen fine essays resulting from research sponsored by the Goethe Gesellschaft in Spain. Twelve are by professors at universities in Spain, the others by scholars in Germany, France, Switzerland, and the United States. The subtitle “Neue Einblicke nach einhundert Jahren” is explained in the foreword, “1910–2010: Hundert Jahre Avantgarde” by the book editors, Dolors Sabaté Planes and Jaime Feijóo. They identify the project’s twin goals as taking “einen aktuellen Blick auf die deutschsprachige Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis in die 20er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts und auf den Beitrag der Avantgarde zu werfen” (9, emphasis added). These lines accurately reflect the two sides of the content of the collection, for some of the articles (mostly those in Part I, “Avantgarde—Theoretisch”) are indeed concerned with defining the scope of the term *avant-garde* in rela-

tion to concepts such as periodization, primitivism, urban culture, cosmopolitanism, and social change, but others investigate German and Austrian literary works written in the chosen epoch from a variety of angles. Articles in the collection refer to various ideas (for example, “Moralische Konflikte” and “Wissensökonomie”) and movements, such as modernism, expressionism, surrealism, the grotesque, “das Unheimliche,” and “Neue Sachlichkeit,” in many cases without directly relating them to the term *avant-garde*. Nor is there strict adherence to the years selected. In the foreword we read, in reference to Mario Saalbach’s article on concrete poetry, “Schließlich wird in diesem Band auch ein Blick auf die Postavantgarde in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts geworfen” (11). Thus, the book’s title serves as an umbrella term that loosely unites its contributions.

The second two sections are titled “Avantgarde—Weiblich” and “Avantgarde—Männlich.” The “male” section adds new insights into several well-known Austrian writers in an article on Joseph Roth and *Neue Sachlichkeit* by Karl Wagner, a study of Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s relationship with Edgard Varèse by Heidi Grünewald, and a new study of Franz Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung* by Fernando Bermejo Rubio. Werner Garstenauer contributes a piece on the complex intersections between art, humor, the grotesque, and scientific rationality in the works of the physician-writers Gottfried Benn and Hans Behr. Finally, “Die innehaltende Tänzerin” by Teresa Vinardell Puig is a provocative analysis of the art of dance in texts by Franz Blei, Robert Walser, and Alfred Döblin. She finds that Walser and Döblin connect the combination of grace and violence associated with the dance to two types of discourse: “demjenigen, der mittels des Bildes der sich peinigenden Tänzerin auf den ambivalenten Zusammenhang von Könnerschaft und Bezwingung zu sprechen kommt [...] und demjenigen, der auf die Schwierigkeit hinweist, weibliche Kreativität und Autonomie zu tolerieren. Im deutlich späteren Text Franz Bleis [...] scheint letzterer Diskurs die Oberhand zu gewinnen” (296).

Puig’s expression of feminist protest is compatible with the studies in “Avantgarde—Weiblich,” which promote a decades-old goal of feminist criticism, publicizing and analyzing ignored and undervalued work of female authors of the past. The apparently equal male/female division in the table of contents might suggest that this goal has already been reached, but a closer look says otherwise. Rosa Marta Gómez Pato, who titles her essay, “Schriëstellerinnen der Wiener Moderne auf der (literarischen) Bühne: eine vergessene Tradition,” states, after listing twenty-two names, “All diese Frauen sind

österreichische SchriEstellerinnen, die in der zweiten HälEe des 19. Jahrhunderts geboren und heute zumeist unbekannt sind" (100). Pato's research reveals that many women played important roles in the artistic and intellectual life in Vienna in the early years of the twentieth century, until their voices were stifled and names suppressed by patriarchal societal forces, if not ultimately by Nazi censorship and genocide. These women writers wrote on contemporary social and gender issues and contributed to the avant-garde through innovation and experimentation. According to Pato, their literary works "spiegeln eine ästhetische Autonomie und eine innovative, subversive Ästhetik wider" (105).

Part 2 also features artistic women who are somewhat better known than those on Pato's list due to recent scholarship and, in some cases, associations with famous men. (Veza Taubner-Calderon Canetti was the wife of Elias Canetti, Irmgard Keun the mistress of Joseph Roth, and salon personality, critic and journalist Berta Zuckermandl a public adversary of controversial Viennese writer Karl Kraus.) Studies in this section include Ulrike Steinhäusl's explication of Zuckermandl's role as "Hebamme der Wiener Moderne," "Claire Goll zwischen Expressionismus und Surrealismus" by Isabel Hernandez, and Gudrun Wedel's analysis of the forms of expression of the "grotesque" dancer, critic, and autobiography writer Valeska Gert. Articles on individual novels include studies of the "Unheimlich" in Gertrud Kolmar's *Susanna* by Dolores Sabaté Planes, expressionism in Keun's *Gilgi, eine von uns* by Konrad Harrer, and the female body in Else Feldmann's *Der Leib der Mutter* by Montserrat Bascoy Lamelas. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz discusses the context of avant-garde movements in the vibrant cities of Vienna and Berlin but reminds the reader that the period culminates in Nazi oppression and genocide, reflected in the lives and novels of two Jewish women writers. Her title is "Flucht- und Endpunkt Avantgarde. Zwei Städte, zwei Traditionen, zwei Autorinnen: Veza Taubner-Calderon (Canetti) and Gertrud Chodziesner (Kolmar)."

No simple or definitive conclusions emerge from this fruitful look back at the complex artistic and cultural realms of the avant-garde era. The essays make solid and stimulating contributions to scholarship, but, rather than yielding any sense of complete understanding, they open up numerous avenues of research still to be done.

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